DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 776 EC 305 469

AUTHOR LaSasso, Carol J.; Mobley, Robert T.
TITLE Results of a National Survey of Reading Instruction for Deaf Students.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 9p.; In: Windows - 97 on the New Standards. Monograph of Collected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Association of College Educators - Deaf and Hard of Hearing (23rd, Santa Fe, NM, March 7-10, 1997); see EC 305 461.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; *Deafness; Elementary Secondary Education; Hearing Impairments; Instructional Material Evaluation; National Surveys; *Portfolio Assessment; Questionnaires; *Reading Instruction; Reading Materials; Reading Programs; Standardized Tests; *Teacher Attitudes; Whole Language Approach

ABSTRACT

A national survey of programs (N=798) for deaf students examined: (1) the organizational frameworks (theoretical or methodological) that programs use for reading instruction; (2) the extent to which "Reading Milestones," a basal series developed for deaf/hard-of-hearing (d/hh) students is used; (3) respondents' satisfaction with "Reading Milestones"; and (4) use of standardized tests and portfolios with d/hh students. Usable responses were received from 267 programs, representing 13,598 d/hh students. Among major findings were the following: 72 percent of programs (compared to 81 percent in a similar 1987 survey) reported use of basal readers; smaller percentages of programs cited use of basals as the primary method of reading instruction; compared to the earlier survey, a greater proportion of programs using basal readers were using "Reading Milestones." Most programs using "Reading Milestones" reported they did so not because of their experience of the material's effectiveness but because it had been developed specifically for this population. A greater number of specific aspects of "Reading Milestones" were rated as weaknesses than in the earlier survey, despite the finding that the vast majority of programs indicated they were satisfied with the series. Additionally, more than 80 percent of respondents characterized their programs as incorporating a whole language approach. Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated that portfolios were the most useful indicator of reading achievement. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 406 776

RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY OF READING INSTRUCTION FOR DEAF STUDENTS

by

Carol J. LaSasso and Robert T. Mobley
Department of Education
Gallaudet University
800 Florida Avenue
Washington, DC, 20002
Tel.: 202-651-5530
FAX: 202-651-5860
E-mail: CJLASASSO@gallua.edu
E-mail: RTMOBLEY@gallua.edu

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J Eglston-Dodd
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

9

EC305469

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Purpose: This study updates information from earlier studies of instructional practices used to develop deaf and hard-of-hearing (d/hh) students' reading abilities (Coley & Bockmiller, 1980, Bockmiller & Coley, 1981; Marshman, 1974; Hasenstab & McKenzie, 1981; LaSasso, 1978, 1987). Among the areas addressed in the present survey were: (1) the organizational frameworks (theoretical or methodological) that programs use for reading instruction, (e.g., basal reader, Whole Language, etc.), (2) the extent to which Reading Milestones is used, (3) program satisfaction with Reading Milestones; and (4) usage of standardized tests and portfolios with d/hh students.

Method: Questionnaires were sent to the 798 programs listed in the 1993 AAD Directory. The person most familiar with the reading program was asked to complete the 8-page questionnaire. Usable questionnaires were received from 267 instructional programs (33.5 percent of those surveyed) representing 13,598 d/hh children.

Major Findings: Several findings suggest that the use of basal readers with d/hh children may be declining: (1) 72 percent of the programs in the present study - compared to 81 percent of the programs in the earlier survey (LaSasso, 1987) - report usage of basal readers with d/hh students; (2) Compared to the earlier study, smaller percentages of programs in the current survey cite usage of basals as the primary (as opposed to supplementary) method of reading instruction with d/hh children: Specifically, for 5-8 year old students 35 percent of the programs in the current study (compared to 64 percent in 1987)

cite basals as the primary method of instruction; for 9-12 year old students, 36 percent (compared to 69 percent in 1987) cite basal usage; for 13-14 year old students, 18 percent (compared to 38 percent in 1987) cite basal usage; and for students 15 years and older, 8 percent (compared to 11 percent in 1987) cite basals as the primary method of instruction.

A major finding of the 1987 study related to the extensive usage of Reading Milestones (1981-1984) and program satisfaction with it, despite the fact that the series was new. A goal of the present study was to determine whether Reading Milestones is still used extensively and whether programs are still satisfied with the program. Our findings reveal that although there appears to be an overall reduction in use of basal readers with d/hh students, a greater proportion of programs using basal readers are using Reading Milestones (30 percent of those in the present study). For 5-8 year old d/hh children, Reading Milestones was reported three times more often than for the next most frequently-reported basal reader. We view it somewhat problematic that only half of the programs selecting Reading Milestones reported they did so because of their "experience that the program had worked well with d/hh students" or that "they had heard good things about the series." Instead, approximately 90 percent of programs indicated they selected the series because "it had been developed for d/hh students."

In the present study, as in the 1987 study, programs were asked to rate specific aspects of Reading Milestones as either a *strength* or a *weakness*. In

1987, clear strengths of Reading Milestones (defined as being cited by at least 65 percent of programs as a strength) were: difficulty of vocabulary, sufficient repetition of vocabulary, complexity of syntax, figurative language, interest level, phonics emphasis, conceptual load, and supplementary materials. In the present study, the only clear strengths were: interest level (for ages 5-8 years), conceptual load (all levels), and supplementary materials (all ages except 9-12). In 1987, of the 44 categories evaluated (i.e., 11 categories for each of four age levels), 36 categories were evaluated as strengths and only 4 areas were evaluated as *weaknesses*. In contrast, in the present study, only 14 categories were evaluated as strengths and 25 were evaluated as weaknesses. This finding is surprising, given: (1) the extensive usage of Reading Milestones and (2) the finding that the vast majority of the programs indicated they were *satisfied* (as opposed to dissatisfied) with the series.

Prior to this study, little was known about the extent to which a Whole Language orientation characterizes reading programs for d/hh students. Our findings reveal that more than 80 percent of the programs participating in our survey characterize their programs as incorporating a Whole Language framework for reading instruction for d/hh students. Whole Language was cited as the overall/umbrella framework for instruction by more than 40 percent of the programs serving 5-13 year old d/hh students and for 33 percent of high-school aged d/hh students.

In an attempt to determine what instructional programs serving d/hh students mean by *Whole Language*, or how programs operationally define programs within a Whole Language framework, programs were asked to select from a list of 18 instructional strategies, those that were incorporated within a Whole Language framework. Strategies included in the list were those most often cited in telephone interviews with programs describing themselves as incorporating a whole language framework. One response option for that question was to write in additional strategies. Fewer than 0.5 percent of the programs did so. Strategies cited most often as being incorporated within a Whole Language framework included: (1) LEA (2) guided reading, (3) sustained silent reading, (4) read alouds, (5) shared reading, (6) process writing, (7) semantic mapping, and (8) dialogue journals.

Data in this survey suggest that instructional programs serving d/hh students do not view Whole Language frameworks and basal reader approaches to be mutually exclusive or incompatible frameworks for reading instruction. Although 40 percent of programs identify Whole Language as the umbrella framework for reading instruction, 33 percent of the programs indicate that basals are the primary method of instruction for 5-12 year old d/hh students. Further, use of skill books, more typical of basal programs than programs within a Whole Language framework, are reported as being used by more than 75 percent of primary aged d/hh students, more than 80 percent programs serving 9-12 year old students, and more than 65 percent of d/hh students who

are 15 years and older. Further, of those who could not characterize their overall umbrella framework for instruction as being solely basal reader, LEA, or Whole Language (thereby selecting "eclectic" and writing in 2-3 frameworks), the most frequently observed pairing was that of basal readers and Whole Language. This is a particularly interesting finding given the view of some that places basal readers and Whole Language on opposite ends of a continuum for purposes of reading instruction and those who view them as being incompatible for purposes of reading instruction.

Prior to this survey, little was known about the extent to which portfolios are used to evaluate reading achievement of d/hh students. Findings from this survey indicate that portfolios are considered by 26 percent of the programs in the study to be the most useful indicator of reading achievement for d/hh students - slightly more than those (25%) who consider standardized tests to be the best indicator.

Conclusion. Data from this survey yield some important insights about current instructional practices used to develop d/hh students' reading abilities in the United States. However, as in earlier studies, some important questions have emerged about the quality of instruction d/hh students are receiving. Specifically, questions are raised about the extensive usage of Reading Milestones for d/hh students, given that fewer than half of the programs cite "having had good experience with the program" or "hearing good things about the program," but, instead, cite that "it was developed for d/hh readers."

Some insights about the nature and extent of usage of Whole Language frameworks for instruction with d/hh students have been obtained from this study; however, many questions for future inquiry have been raised. These include: (1) whether or not instructional programs serving d/hh students consider Whole Language frameworks and basal reader usage compatible, (2) if so, specifically how basal readers are used within a Whole Language framework, (3) whether instructional programs serving d/hh students consider top-down, bottom-up, or interactive views about the reading process to be most valid for d/hh students, and (4) the extent to which skill development is emphasized in programs characterized as employing a Whole Language orientation.

Another area for future inquiry relates to portfolio assessment. Among the questions needing to be addressed include: (1) what do programs that use portfolios with d/hh students *include* in the portfolios?, (2) what is the role of *tests* in portfolios?, and (3) how are reading grades determined from portfolios? Hopefully, answers to these questions will be addressed in future studies of instructional practices used to develop reading abilities of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

References

Bockmiller, P., & Coley, J. (1981). A survey of methods, materials, and teacher preparation among teachers of reading to the hearing-impaired. The Reading Teacher, 34, 526-529.

Coley, J., & Bockmiller, P. (1980). Teaching reading to the deaf: An examination of teacher preparedness and practices. American Annals of the Deaf, 125, 909-915.

Hasenstab, M., & McKenzie, C. (1981). A survey of reading programs used with hearing-impaired students. The Volta Review, 83, 383-388.

LaSasso, C. (1987). Survey of instructional procedures used to teach reading to hearing-impaired students in the United States. Volta Review, 89, 85-98.

LaSasso, C. (1978). A national survey of materials and procedures used to teach reading to hearing-impaired children. American Annals of the Deaf, 123, 22-30.

Marshman, K. (1974). A descriptive study of reading instruction for the deaf in residential public schools in the United States. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Georgia.